



Our Students. Their Moment.

# Schools Against Violence in Education

Board of Regents  
Monday, January 14<sup>th</sup>



# History of Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE)

- In January 1999, Governor Pataki created the Task Force on School Violence.
- A Task Force Report, *Safer Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Common Sense Approach to Keep New York's Students and Schools Safe*, was issued in October 1999.
- The Task Force Report lead to the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act.
- The SAVE Act was passed by the New York State Legislature and signed into law by Governor Pataki as Chapter 181 of the Laws of 2000 to address issues of school safety and violence prevention.
- Regents established School Safety Work Group, that produced SAVE implementation guidance in 2001.

# The Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act

Among other things, the SAVE legislation added a new section 2801-a to the Education Law requiring districts, BOCES and county vocational education and extension boards to:

- establish district-wide school safety and building-level school safety teams to develop district-wide and building-level school safety plans; and
- address crisis intervention, emergency response and management at the district level through comprehensive, multi-hazard school safety plans.

# Related Law

On March 19, 2001, Education Law §408-b, which was signed into law by Governor Pataki as Chapter 478, Section 1, of the Laws of 2000, became effective and it requires:

- the appropriate authorities for each public and private school building in New York State to submit copies of the most current plans and specifications for each school building under their responsibility to local fire and law enforcement officials.

# Associated Regulations Promulgated under SAVE

- In July 2001, the Board of Regents amended Section 155.17 of the Commissioner's regulations to implement the Education Law §2801-a's school safety plans requirements.
- In July 2011, the Board of Regents again amended Section 155.17 of the Commissioner's regulations to reinforce the strategies related to the public availability of school safety plans. This regulation was further amended to ensure that the following confidential information is not accidentally disclosed to the public:
  - home telephone numbers of local education officials; and
  - the tactical strategies for responding to critical events such as building evacuation and sheltering.

# Department Guidance Provided to Schools and Districts

- April 2001 - *Project SAVE Guidance Document for School Safety Plans* was disseminated to all schools statewide.
- December 2004 - SED partnered with the NYS Office of Homeland Security, State Police, and the State Office of Emergency Management to issue *Best Practices for School Safety and Security*. This guide included a video. This guidance was updated in September 2007.
- June 2010 – The NYS Center for School Safety and SED provided updated guidance: *School Safety Plan Guidance: Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE)*.

# The District Plan

District-wide school safety plans are *public* and must include, among other things, policies and procedures for:

- contacting law enforcement in the event of an emergency;
- contacting parents, guardians or persons in parental relation to students in the event of an emergency or an early dismissal;
- the use of school safety officers and/or security devices or procedures, as appropriate;
- the identification of appropriate responses to emergencies; and
- responding to acts of violence and implied or direct threats of violence by students, faculty, staff or anyone else in the school building.

# The School Plan

Building-level school safety plans are *confidential* and are not subject to disclosure under article 6 of the Public Officers Law or any other provision of law. These plans must include, among other things, policies and procedures for:

- creating and maintaining an emergency response team at the school with clear chain of command;
- safely evacuating students, faculty, staff and anyone else in the school building during an emergency;
- ensuring that first responders have access to, among other things, interior floor plans and as well as school grounds plans and road maps of the immediate surrounding area; and
- annual review and conducting drills and other exercises to test components of emergency plans, in coordination with local and county emergency responders and preparedness officials.



# Key Partners for Implementation

Since the adoption of Commissioner's Regulation 155.13 (now 155.17) in 1989, SED has partnered with other State agencies, BOCES, and the New York State Center for School Safety (NYSCSS) on issues related to school safety/emergency preparedness and response. This work has included the development and delivery of guidance, technical assistance and training to school districts throughout New York State.

- The New York State Center for School Safety reviewed district-wide plans following the implementation of SAVE.
- The New York State Center for School Safety reviews building-level plans and re-reviews the district-wide plans whenever needed. The Center participates in Persistently Dangerous School visit reviews through the Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting process (VADIR).

# Department Support to Districts and Schools

- Elimination of Federal funding from the Safe and Drug Free Schools program which supported the Department's technical assistance efforts and staff reductions have significantly reduced the Department's capacity in this area.
- The Department relies on the assistance of the BOCES health and safety coordinators and the New York Center for School Safety to provide technical assistance to schools and districts.

# Current Tracking of Incidents in the School Setting: VADIR Reporting System

The intended goal of VADIR and the Dignity for All Students Act (Dignity) data reporting is to promote a safe and supportive school climate.

- VADIR is a self reporting tool that gathers data on violent and disruptive incidents that occur on school property or at a school function.
- The Dignity Act also requires the reporting of material incidents of discrimination and harassment occurring on school property or at a school function.
- A school's VADIR data is used to compute the school violence index (SVI). The SVI is used to determine whether a school is designated a Persistently Dangerous (PD) school.
- Once a school is designated as PD it triggers a Department review process and technical assistance designed to address the conditions and issues related to school safety.

# Next Steps

- Reestablish Safety Work Group
- Improve regulations, guidance, training, and communications with schools, districts, families and support organizations
- Improvements to the current VADIR system in consultation with DCJS and other stakeholders
- Review and revise technical assistance and professional development plan with NYSCSS

# Reestablish Safety Work Group

Reestablish the 2000-2001 Work Group on School Safety

- Include representation from original partner organizations such as: Boards of Cooperative Educational Services; New York City Department of Education; New York State Center for School Safety; New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services; New York State Office of Emergency Management; New York State Office Mental Health; and New York State Police
- Include representation from additional partners and constituents such as: Big 4; Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association; District Attorneys Association of the State of NY; NYS School Boards Association; NYS Council of School Superintendents; Council of School Supervisors & Administrators; Association of Small City School Districts; NYS United Teachers; NYS Parent-Teacher Association; NYS School Social Workers Association; NYS Superintendents of School Buildings and Grounds; and the School Administrators Association of NYS.



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